

# ATTENTION-GETTING DEVICES (for your Intro Paragraph)

The first several sentences of an introductory paragraph should consist of attention getting or interest sentences. Below are several examples of different techniques which may be used to lead the reader to the thesis statement, which is the final one or two sentences of the introductory paragraph.

## 1. NARRATION

Harry Houdini, the great escape artist, never ran out of ways to attract the interest of the general public. Even the events surrounding his death demonstrate his flair for the dramatic. According to an often quoted story, Houdini, just before he died, told his wife that he would communicate with her from "the other side." From his death to just before her death in 1943, when she gave up trying to reach him, this promise kept his widow from fading into obscurity. It was this ability to stimulate the interest of the public that also served him well in life, particularly during his performances. *Houdini, a successful showman, knew how to captivate his spectators.* He could excite them with the danger and suspense of his acts, amuse them with unexpected touches of humor, or stimulate their curiosity.

## 2. FACTUAL DATA OR STATISTICS

Harry Houdini, the great escape artist was born in 1874. There has been some controversy over where he was born. Some biographers argue Budapest, Hungary; others, however, support his claim of having been born in Appleton, Wisconsin. This controversy notwithstanding, Houdini's real name was Erich Weiss, and at an early age Erich demonstrated an uncanny grasp of the art of trapeze flying. As he grew older, he became fascinated with magic and with the fantastic tricks of such performers as the French magician Robert-Houdini, from whose name he later derived Houdini. It was from such magicians that he also gained his showmanship. *Houdini, a successful showman, knew how to captivate his spectators.* He could excite them with the danger and suspense of his acts, amuse them with unexpected touches of humor, or stimulate their curiosity.

## 3. QUOTATION

In his article on "conjuring" in the 1926 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, the great master of escape Harry Houdini asserted that he owed his success to his "great physical strength and the fact that he [was] slightly bowlegged." But when one reads about the remarkable career of this amazing performer, one finds the man's showmanship more impressive than his athletic attributes. *Houdini, a successful showman, knew how to captivate his spectators.* He could excite them with the danger and suspense of his acts, amuse them with unexpected humor, or stimulate their curiosity.

## 4. STARTLING STATEMENT

It has been said that each of us, at one time or another, considers committing suicide. But the real tragedy is that each year more than half a million people not only contemplate suicide but actually succeed in taking their own lives. *This high suicide rate is influenced by a number of factors.* Among them are psychological states, sociological conditions, and ineffective means of prevention.

## 5. GENERAL STATEMENTS

Mention life insurance to most people, and they confess that they are confused about the subject. Some even swear that their insurance agent had to get special training to deal with the difficult language of life insurance. *People need not be confused, however, because there are actually only three basic types of life insurance--ordinary life, term life, and endowment life--and each has features designed to meet particular requirements.* Fast-food restaurants are becoming more and more popular in the United States. The rapid pace of contemporary society and the need of those "on the go" for quick meals bring the American public through the doors of fast-food restaurants in ever-increasing numbers. No longer is the fast-food restaurant primarily a hangout for teenagers. On the contrary, during recent years people of all ages have come to rely on fast-food outlets as a means of satisfying their appetite for the all-American meal of hamburger, French fries, and soft drink. Playing host to such a mass of hungry drop-ins is bound to put a strain on those who work in a fast-food restaurant. *Of the different types of customers who frequent fast-food restaurants, some are more welcome than others.* In particular, three types of customers become very familiar to those who must serve them: the impatient ones, the picky ones, and--perhaps the salvation of the employees--the easy-to-please ones.

## 6. COMBINATION

Born in 1874, the great escape artist, Harry Houdini lived in an age that, as a result of new advances in science, was Fascinated with the unusual and inexplicable. The Great Houdini took advantage of his audience's taste, performing Generalization seemingly impossible tasks and reaping their wonder and Generalization appreciation. If his audiences had only known the most of Generalization what they saw during a performance was easily accomplishable for a "slightly bowlegged" man of "great physical strength," Quotation they might not have been quite so impressed. *Houdini, however, was a successful showman who knew how to captivate his spectators.* He could excite them with the danger and suspense of his acts, amuse them with unexpected touches of humor, or stimulate their curiosity.

### WHAT NOT TO SAY IN YOUR INTRODUCTION

**1. Avoid telling the reader that you are beginning your essay:**

"In this essay, I will discuss . . ."

"I will talk about . . ."

"I am going to prove . . ."

**2. Do not apologize in your paper:**

"Although I am not an expert . . ."

"In my humble opinion . . ."

**3. Do not refer to later parts of your essay:**

By the end of this essay one will agree . . .

In the next paragraph people will see . . .

**4. Do not use lame expressions.** Since they have been so overused, they will lack interest.

Using such expression shows that you have not taken time to use your own words to express your ideas. Some examples of corny expressions are:

"busy as a bee"

"you can't tell a book from its cover"

"haste makes waste"

**5. Do not make your introduction too long.**

This paragraph usually needs about half as many sentences as your body paragraphs. (The length of the introduction may vary in proportion to the length of the essay. A long 2,000 word research paper may require a longer introduction.)

**6. Do not use second person "you" as if your reader were sitting next to you.**

### *ANOTHER Sample Introduction Paragraph*

**[ATTENTION-GETTER]** After the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on New York's World Trade Towers and the Pentagon, the debate surrounding racial profiling in airports intensified. Many people believed that profiling was the best way to identify possible terrorists, but many others worried about violations of civil liberties. While some airports began to target passengers based solely on their Middle Eastern origins, others instituted random searches instead. **[BEGIN SETTING-UP THE THESIS]** Neither of these techniques seems likely to eliminate terrorism. Now many experts in the government and in airport security are recommending the use of a national ID card or Safe Traveler Card. **[THESIS]** If every US citizen had such a card, airlines could screen for terrorists more effectively than they do now and avoid procedures that single out individuals solely on the basis of race.